

Photographer Kirk Gittings

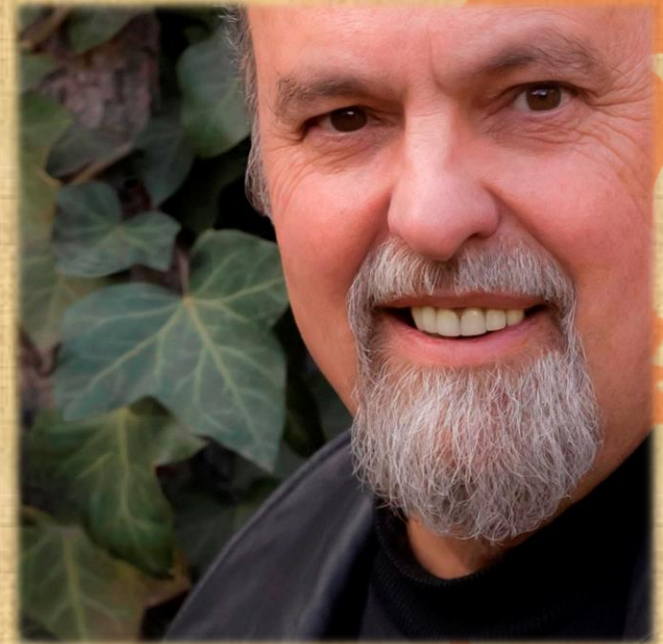
Born in Alaska but raised in New Mexico, Kirk Gittings has resided in New Mexico for some 57 years. He first studied photography at the renowned photo program of the University of New Mexico and later received his Master of Fine Arts Degree in Photography from the University of Calgary In Alberta, Canada.

Known for his architectural and cultural landscape photography, his work has been widely published and exhibited across the country. His exhibit record now well exceeds 100 venues. Additionally his work is currently in the permanent collections of 27 public art collections in the US, Canada and France.

As a photographic educator he taught photography for 11 years at The University of New Mexico and has taught for the last 17 years at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He also currently teaches at the Santa Fe University of Art and Design and has led numerous workshops including at the Santa Fe Photographic Workshops.

New Mexico Magazine published a biography and retrospective of his work “Shelter from the Storm: The Photographs of Kirk Gittings” in 2005 with an accompanying retrospective exhibit at The Albuquerque Museum of Art and History.

He has received numerous honors and awards including a major grant from The National Endowment for the Arts, membership in the Polaroid Corp. Artists Support Group, appointment to the Advisory Board of Freestyle Photographic in Hollywood and in 2006 the New Mexico State Legislature passed a special proclamation which honored him for his life’s work. Recently in 2015 the University of New Mexico presented him a distinguished alumni “Zia Award” in recognition of his many accomplishments as a photographic artist and educator.



I have always found the greatest sense of presence in abandoned or unpopulated places. This feeling of "presence" comes upon me even in places that have no obvious visual evidence of past or current human occupation. It is a great irony to me that places which feel so desperately lonely are also where I feel the most alive.

Perhaps that feeling comes from my extensive study of Southwestern archeology. The evidence of man is everywhere if you know where to look-virtually all SW landscapes are actually "cultural" landscapes.

The Petrified Forest is no exception. Where ever I traveled there I found evidence of man-sometimes structures or petroglyphs but sometimes something as little as small stone flakes from tool making the size of the nail on my little finger. I would notice these on the ground between my tripod legs as I waited for some elusive dramatic light over some spectacular view.

I find high promontories the perfect loci for contemplating the long history and uniqueness of a place. Like the center of a Chaco spiral petroglyph, such places draw me inexorably into their center to ponder and photograph.

Such a place is the northern edge of Blue Mesa in the Petrified Forest. Each day during my artist residency I was irresistibly drawn there. As I stood on the edge in the late afternoon before me lay one of the great corridors of SW human history. Across this vast landscape traveled Clovis hunters following large herds of mammals 13,000 years ago. Later Pueblo Indians traded from Wupatki in Arizona to Acoma in New Mexico and back. The Pony Express delivered mail across this expanse. Then the Santa Fe railroad dropped earnest adventurers, including John Muir, in the lap of the Petrified Forest to heal their lungs or create art or advance earth sciences. In my own family's time Rt.66 funneled poor farmer's fleeing their failing farms toward the Promised Land of California.

All of my photographs in this exhibition came from those monsoon afternoons on Blue Mesa. I still feel its inexorable draw.



Jul 2013

Walking Rain

Size

Frame: 24 ¼ W X 20 ¼ L X 1 ¼ Thick; Black aluminum Frame with 5/8 Trim